

WEEKLY DENTAL UPDATE



SPECIAL EDITION

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PASSING OF CAPTAIN RICHARD HARPER

CAPT Richard Harper (ret) was born on May 11, 1938 in Chambersburg, PA to Robert and Dorothy Harper of Chambersburg. Graduating from high school in 1956, he attended Lebanon Valley College, graduating there in 1960. He accepted a high school teaching position in Baltimore County, MD where he taught math and science for two years. He requested and was accepted into the Department of Defense School System, receiving an assignment to teach math, science and biology in Mannheim, Germany the year the Berlin Wall was going up. He and his family then transferred to the Clark Air Force Base Dependent High School in the Philippines and while there was accepted into the dental school program at the University of Pittsburgh. When starting dental school in 1965, he commissioned in the Navy Dental Corps as an Ensign and obtained the rank of Lieutenant upon graduation from dental school in 1969.



His first assignment as a dental officer was to the Marine Air Wing at Cherry Point, NC followed by an assignment to the dental command in Guam. The Navy then selected him for training to the University of Indiana's graduate program in restorative dentistry. Completing his Master of Science degree, Dr. Harper was assigned to the Navy's graduate dental school at the Bethesda Naval Hospital as an instructor and mentor to the graduate dental officers in attendance. Two years later, he was assigned to the dental command in Norfolk as the regional consultant in restorative dentistry. His temporary duties while stationed in Norfolk included assignments to Cuba, Bermuda and Iceland.

Following two years in private practice in Meadville, he returned to Bethesda where he was Chairman of both the graduate Operative Dentistry and General Dentistry programs. During this two year assignment, he was selected to be the Dental Corps detailee, working for the Navy's Bureau of Personnel (BUPERS) in Arlington, VA. A visit to the dental clinics in Europe and Cairo, Egypt were undertaken by him to ensure adequate staffing at these clinics. An assignment as the Executive Officer in the European dental command, headquartered in Naples, Italy followed the BUPERS assignment. His responsibilities were to assist the Commanding Officer, ensuring that the dental clinics in England, Scotland, Wales, Spain, Greece and Italy were staffed and supported in their role as dental care providers for all Navy and Marine Corps personnel assigned in Europe. Additional assignment to Bahrain and Portugal were also his responsibility.

Following his three year tour in Naples, Dr. Harper received orders as the Commanding Officer to the Navy dental clinics in the Northwest U.S., headquartered in Bremerton, WA. Navy Dental Clinics in Idaho, Alaska, Oregon and Washington state fell under his list of responsibilities. Dr. Harper returned from the three year tour in Bremerton to Washington, D.C. as he was now assigned to the Surgeon General's staff at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's dental division for operational readiness of all

Navy dental clinics worldwide. A three year tour there found him accepting his last navy assignment, one which he requested, that of Dean of the Navy Postgraduate Dental School at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, his third assignment there. He retired from the United States Navy in 1997. His awards included the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (three stars), and the Navy Achievement Medal.

Upon retirement from the Navy, he accepted a position as consultant to the dental department at the Cleveland Clinic, a position he held for 21 years, retiring in 2018. His community involvement included membership in the Literary Union, the Civil War roundtable, a charter member and first president of the Northwestern Woodlot Owners Association and a life time membership with the American Legion post in Saegertown.

He married his high school sweetheart, Marie Capazo of Chambersburg, who accompanied him on all his military assignments throughout the world. They enjoyed a marriage of 61 years and were blessed with two wonderful children, Mike, who sadly passed away while on an assignment for his employer, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection; and his daughter, Shelly, who works for an environmental protection company in Hagerstown, MD. CAPT Harper's granddaughter, Whitney, and his two great-granddaughters, Cleopatra and Athena Stottlemeyer, reside in Greencastle, PA.

His funeral will be private, with his remains being laid to rest with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery, with date to be determined.

Donations in his memory can be made to his son's memorial scholarship fund (account # 25471) at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

G.D. SHAFFER